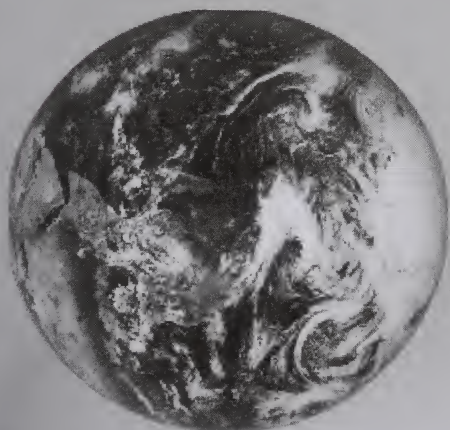


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Volume XXVI

1999



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XXVI

1999

Copiah-Lincoln Community College

Microcosm...

is published annually at Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Wesson Mississippi. In the creation of this XXVI Edition of *Microcosm* the staff met challenges and turned them into opportunities of learning for all who worked diligently to meet the deadline.

Each year the Division of Humanities on the Copiah-Lincoln campus sponsors a competition open to the college students and the area high-school students. therefore, the views expressed throughout this publication are those of the authors and not the staff or advisors.

The judges for this competition are the members of the *Microcosm* staff and English faculty: Evelyn Sutton, Edna Earle Crews, Nancy Dykes, Pam Reid, Sharon Alexander, and Ashley Bonds. Durr Walker, Jr., is chairperson of the Humanities Division.

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Notes from the Editor

Once again another year is almost completed for some here at Copiah-Lincoln Community College. It has been my pleasure to serve as the Executive Editor for this publication. It takes hard work and true dedication from students to assist in the coming together of this work known as *Microcosm*.

When I enrolled in Copiah-Lincoln in 1996, never did I once think that I would be an editor of an on-campus publication. All I really wanted was to finish my Child Development Degree and move on. Once I became involved in other organizations on campus, it was easy to see there was much more than just a two-year degree involved.

At the encouragement of several instructors on campus, I decided to continue with my educational goals. Through my creative writing classes and my time spent on the staff of *Microcosm* and "Bits and Pieces," I have had several opportunities to explore new avenues and increase my knowledge in areas of writing and editing. Along with this knowledge gained, I have won several awards with pieces developed through creative writing and professional writing classes.

To my staff for the past two semesters and those before, I wish to thank each of you for the time that you put in to make the Twenty-Sixth Edition of *Microcosm* a success. To the prior editors, I thank you for allowing me to explore avenues with you through being a part of your staff. Mrs. Crews and Mr. Ross, I say to you, keep believing in what you are doing with the students and publications on this campus. Believe me, the work that goes into them is a great learning experience and challenge!

Finally, I would like to leave you with these words: To work alone is a great task and hard to complete, but teamwork is always a success! Thank you again to all of the writers, staff, and faculty who put their time and effort into the completion of this publication and thanks to all of you who inspired me to go forward when I felt like giving up.

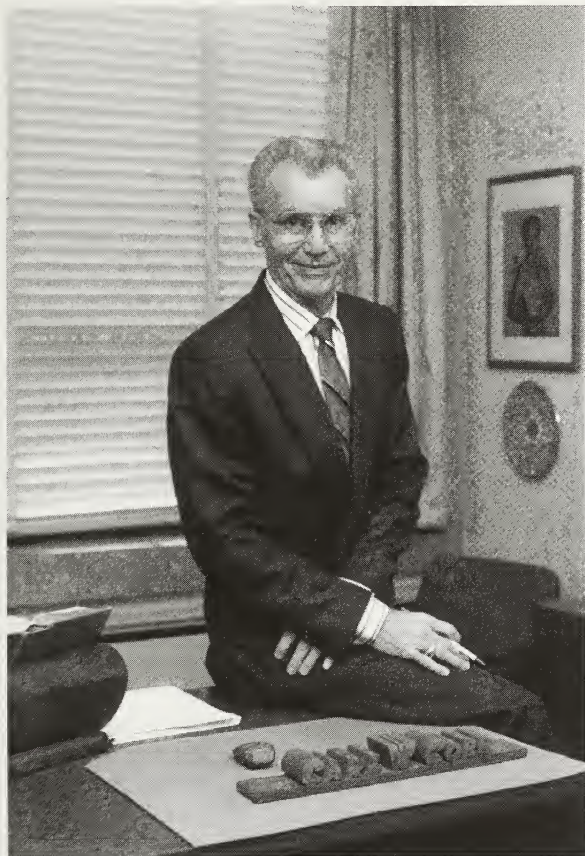
Diane Walker

Diane Walker
Executive Editor

Carl W. Cobb

Literary Hall of Fame

Efficacious Language



Carl W. Cobb

In the late 1940's, Copiah-Lincoln Community College was home to a young man who had a desire to study language. He went on to Peabody College to major in English and it was there that he discovered a desire to teach literature in college. Carl Cobb continued his work in the Spanish Language at Peabody. In Virginia Intermont, he began to teach Spanish and received a Fellowship to study and do research in Bogota Columbia. After his research in Bogota, he became committed and went on to earn his Ph.D. in Spanish and English at Tulane University in 1961.

According to Carl, he spent the mature years of his career as a graduate professor of Spanish at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, teaching language, literature, and writing criticism of translating modern Spanish poetry. Through the years, Carl has produced twenty-five book-length volumes and two minor ones of his own poetry. In his own words, "I have been working (or playing!) determinedly to create efficacious language."

Efficacious Language

Carl W. Cobb

In the twentieth century of course language itself has become perhaps our deepest problem. From Plato and Socrates down to Kant, perhaps it was assumed that language could transcribe simple reality; for Plato, therefore, the philosopher is the greatest figure. For others in earlier times, the poet was a seer who by the grace of God could produce efficacious language. But modern man has determined that both poet and philosopher produce only language, and that the only important thing to study is language. And this study has produced the conclusion that language cannot transcribe simple reality; language and reality cannot be the same. As a result of this conclusion, both philosopher and poet are today held in small esteem—the scientist reigns. Thus we in Liberal Arts, who work often with the language of philosophers and poets, have in many ways faced difficult times. Our brightest intellectuals have often been reduced to massive irony which is negative, without faith in the Liberal Arts, but we more modest intellectuals have continued to work with faith and hope, though admittedly in limited and arcane areas.

Thus I discovered a satisfying career in translating modern Spanish poetry still in traditional form. Since I began schooling in the 1930s, I grew up on Sir Walter Scott and Byron and Keats and Longfellow, poets with musical, traditional forms, with meter and rhyme. After 1950 traditional forms became almost indecent; for the newer generations free verse replaced traditional forms by way of “progress.” Little by little, high school and even college students could avoid poetry, except for those few writing intellectual free verse that only they were reading. But I stubbornly focused upon Spanish poets who had devoted themselves especially to the ballad and the sonnet. Both of these forms, in Spanish and in English, go back five hundred years and form an important part of poetic tradition. After achieving success with a ballad translation of García Lorca’s famous *Romancero gitano*, or *Gypsy Balladbook* (which, by the way, was printed by the University Press of Mississippi), I turned to the sonnet, an important form in Spanish literature. In English, we of course remember Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, which are in a distinctive (but quite easy) form, one much simpler than the Petrarchan and Spanish form. In Spanish, from the 15th century the poets have used Petrarch’s form, in which there is a double-quadruple rhyme in the two quatrains and a double-triple rhyme in the sestet. In English, poets such as Sir Philip Sidney, Milton, Wordsworth, Dante Rossetti, Elizabeth Browning, and Edna St. Vincent Millay have successfully utilized the Petrarchan pattern. Now some would consider this a hard form for the Spanish poet to achieve; imagine that the poor translator must achieve this demanding form while at the same time saving all the meaning! Translation of a Petrarchan sonnet into a Petrarchan sonnet can be a humbling experience, but I stubbornly persisted, working with a modest inspiration, the dictionary, the Thesaurus, and

of course the Rhyming Dictionary. The simplest line can often be the hardest to translate. And, since English is a monosyllabic language and Spanish is not, often the Spanish line will not fill the English. Since traditionally the Spanish hendecasyllabic (or eleven syllable) line compares historically with the English iambic pentameter, this line must be used to translate a normal Spanish sonnet. As for rhyme, English with thirteen vowels makes rhyming difficult; in Spanish there are only five vowels. Finally, certain important words have few rhymes: *death*, for example has only one rhyme. Still I have translated books of sonnets by Lope de Vega, Jiménez, Diego, de Otero, Gaos, and José Eustasio Rivera.

(An example of the works explained above and the sonnet by Juan Ramón Jiménez, the Nobel Prize recipient in 1958, appears in the poetry section of this publication.)



Illustrator: Megan Edmonds

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Nathaniel Hawthorne's Marked Females

Tobie Bozeman

Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales often include recurring themes of marked or flawed women. These women who are more often the main characters in his stories have a very strong presence and personality. Many of the women in his stories such as Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* are permanently unforgettable. Ideas of women in and before Hawthorne's time were narrow and shallow. The theme of the marked female is used in many of his most famous stories. Why does Hawthorne portray females as marked or flawed? Hawthorne uses this theme in his female characters to voice the struggles that women must overcome.

Ideas of women in and before Hawthorne's time were very cruel, inaccurate, and most of all, ignorant. Hawthorne was a descendent of one of the judges of the infamous Salem witch trials. He was raised in a Puritan background but later rejected the Puritan ideology. In Hawthorne's own time society was growing away from Puritanism and becoming more industrially oriented. Morals were still held in high regard, though. In the time period of Hawthorne's tales a female was considered an evil Eve. This may explain Hawthorne's attempts to reenact the story of the Garden of Eden in stories such as "Rappaccini's Daughter." Women were considered vindictive, selfish, and deceptive. This is why in the time when Puritanism was thriving females who were discovered to be intelligent or independent to any small degree were considered evil and were tortured by arrogant males and often fingered for witches. In the view of the typical Puritan male a woman with intelligence was a very dangerous thing. Women were capable of sin, mischief, and evil and with intellect or independence they were capable of even more. Surely Hawthorne would have agreed with Virginia Woolf's views on women in the 16th century.

Any woman born with a great gift in the 16th century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty. (79)

Marked or flawed females appear over and over in many of Hawthorne's most famous stories. The females in his tales often carry a huge burden that they must overcome. But the actual burden that Hawthorne is trying to convey in the stories is the burden of discrimination, judgement, and condem-

nation suffered by women. The burden in the story only serves as a symbol of the real burden bestowed upon women in reality. In "The Birthmark" the female character, Georgiana, is a woman of perfect beauty. But she is flawed by a birthmark which her husband, a scientist, becomes obsessed with and takes upon himself the right and ability to remove it. In doing this, he is taking on the God complex that many of Hawthorne's male characters exhibit. He also locks Georgiana and himself in his laboratory to keep her safe from the sin and imperfections of the outside world creating an artificial Garden of Eden. Georgiana dies from drinking a potion that her husband made for the removal of her birthmark. Georgiana's birthmark serves as a symbol of her imperfection and it is also a reminder that women are natural and are created by God just as men are. Her husband's attempts to remove it indicate the way she is seen as an object and a possession to him. He governs every aspect of her life right down to the way she should look.

The same concept of symbolism applies to "Rappaccini's Daughter." Rappaccini is also a scientist. Once again, the God complex comes into play when he begins to experiment with his own daughter, Beatrice, causing her to take on the characteristics of a deadly plant. This becomes Beatrice's flaw. There are three males in this particular story. They are Beatrice's chosen fiancé Giovanni, her father Rappaccini, and her father's scientific colleague and rival Baglioni. The setting is a toxic garden created by Beatrice's father. Hawthorne creates yet another artificial Garden of Eden. Also, the presence of three males makes the Eden parallel even more accurate. With a little imagination they could easily represent God, Adam, and the Serpent. Beatrice's poison represents the male idea that women really are evil and dangerous. The male characters suppress her and each want and expect something from her that may be impossible for her to provide, such as perfection. This finally drives her to suicide. But even though she dies the reader often misses the point that she does survive and even thrives in a toxic and poisonous environment created by men. She does overcome them in her own way by surviving as long as she did.

In both "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" the outcome is death for the female characters. Male suppression and control drives them to their death. Just as in reality discrimination can destroy a woman's self-esteem, mentality, and sense of independence. Arrogant male ideals may not always kill women but it can destroy them from the inside out. In the cases of these stories the sin belongs to the men and the death of their beloved females serves as the punishment.

Why does Hawthorne portray females as marked or flawed? At first glance, it would seem as though Hawthorne means to say that there is something wrong with women, that they are dirty, or different from men, but that is not the case. He uses this theme in his female characters to actively protest the way women were treated in his day and before him. His messages are almost subliminal because if he were to voice his opinion openly in his writings, then most males of his time probably would not have read his work.

I believe his intentions were to promote the awareness of equality without being directly political, forthcoming, or boring. Arlin Turner writes

about Hawthorne's pro-equality views:

"Hawthorne read Scott [a writer for women's equality] avidly—as well as Rousseau's revolutionary ideas about equality at all levels. He never viewed women as unimportant or as threatening Eves, but rather as men's vital emotional, intellectual, and spiritual cohorts. He grew up with two sisters and a widowed mother, married an intellectual and emotional peer, and fathered two outspoken daughters. Women were companions, not threats" (356).

Hawthorne had no problem at all with women. He believed that they were equal. He treated his wife and his daughters as equals. He and his wife had a long and happy marriage. Perhaps he did not want to treat his own wife like his Puritan father treated his mother. After his father died, his mother went into deep depression and lost her self-worth. It took her years to recover. She depended on him to the fullest and after he died she was determined that she could not make it on her own and that she had nothing else to live for.

Hawthorne's stories are full of marked women. But God does not mark them; they are marked by men simply for being who and what they are. Hawthorne gives us a look into the minds and feelings of women controlled and dominated by men. His innovative and clever writing style plants a less obvious message in our minds right under our noses but we tend to overlook it. When we think we are reading about a poisonous, sinful, or weak woman, we are in fact reading a political statement. The marks or flaws on Hawthorne's females represent the marks that all women have that they must triumph over. Even in today's "equal" world, women must prove themselves worthy in the workplace and in the home. They must rise to the challenge for fear that if the task is not perfect then it is surely because they are female. Hawthorne took us a step in the right direction, and there are still many things that we can learn from his timeless writings.

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Illustrator: Rencher Lann

Just Like a Woman

Melissa Bueto

Countless numbers of times we hear men make the comment "That's just like a woman." Most of the time we would take offense to this snide remark. However, in the cases of Editha, Shirley, Louisa, and Mrs. Sommers, I am in total agreement with the men. I can see my own personal qualities in each of these women.

In "A Pair of Silk Stockings" by Kate Chopin, Mrs. Sommers lets a few extra dollars go straight to her head. Instead of buying things for her children, she becomes wrapped up in selfishness and spends all of the money on herself. Mrs. Sommers purchased a pair of silk stockings, boots, gloves, dinner, and a ticket to the theater.

This sounds very familiar. If I have extra money, instead of getting ahead on bills, I will spend it on myself. My purchases would probably include beanie babies, picture frames, porcelain dolls, and hair accessories. Every once in a while one must indulge in personal fruits. Now, isn't that "just like a woman?"

Shirley in "The Second Choice" by Theodore Dreiser, has a different problem. She wants bigger, better, faster, and more. She falls for this fast talking, big dreaming, continental guy even though she has a "good ole boy" at home. Barton and Shirley had been dating for a long time. Everything was just peachy until Arthur came along. Now Barton is beginning to look very generic. "Joe Cool," Arthur, talks of far away places and out-of-reach dreams. "Love em and leave em" seems to be his motto. All the while Barton still exists in his simple world and remains smitten over Shirley. When Arthur leaves her, fate looks her in the face and laughs at her. She entertains the idea of returning to Barton, who is still pining over her, but she doesn't feel worthy of his love.

I had the same problem. I left true and ever faithful Alan for "friend-o-mine" Max. Things were great for about two hours and then fate kicked me in the backside. We definitely learn from our mistakes. Now, isn't that "just like a woman?"

In the story "Editha" by William Dean Howells, a woman named Editha doesn't get exactly what she wants. She preaches the whole time about how she wants her boyfriend to be a brave soldier in battle. She wants someone she can be proud of after the war was over. He did not even want to go into battle in the first place, but he decided to go because of her. He then died in battle because he was being brave. Her brave soldier came home to her, but he came as a corpse.

We all want something that we can be proud of. Editha just went a little too far. Now, isn't that "just like a woman?"

Finally, we will look at Louisa in Mary Wilkins Freeman's story "A New England Nun." Now here's someone I can really relate with. Everything

about her had to be in order. Everything had its place, everything was done a certain way, and she did not like disruptions. Her house was spotless, her pets were peaceful, and she had her hobbies. She felt obligated to marry Joe, her fiancé from fourteen years ago. He left to go make his fortune and returned to marry her. In the meantime, he falls out of love with Louisa and in love with another girl. This is good because Louisa fell out of love with him too. They both would have held true to their promise to marry each other if they had to. Neither wanted to hurt the other, but neither wanted to marry the other either. Louisa overhears Joe and Lily discussing their feelings for each other. Louisa is relieved to have found a dignified way out of this arrangement. They part with no hard feelings and everything goes back to normal.

I am a very neat and orderly person and I am set in my ways. Louisa and I probably would have made real good friends. I, too, keep my promises. Like SuperBowl Sunday, for instance. I promised to work four hours for a co-worker although I did not know that the SuperBowl was going on. I stuck to my promise despite my unwillingness to work. Now, isn't that "just like a woman?"

This *stereotype* for women would usually bring about a hostile attitude towards the man who gave it. These four women and I have much in common so we need to stick together, not just to gang up on men, but for support for each other. Now isn't that "just like a woman"?



Illustrator: Rencher Lann

Fool's Gold

Wendy Cater

At the end of every rainbow there is a pot of gold, or is there? In "The Second Choice," by Theodore Dreiser, Shirley believes that her relationship is like a rainbow and her pot of gold is Arthur. In this story, first printed in *Cosmopolitan* in February, 1918, the element of naturalism gives no responsibility to Shirley. She is merely a pawn in Arthur's game in which he is the master. Barton loves Shirley, she loves Arthur, and Arthur loves himself. Shirley can be in no way held accountable for the feelings of her heart. She has no choice, no responsibility, no fault and sadly no blame. True to naturalism, there is also tragedy. Shirley, scorned by Arthur, accepts Barton, worshipping, waiting, and willing, as her second choice.

Just as a rainbow magically transforms the sky into a bursting array of colors, Arthur paints Shirley's milk-white world, "filling it with something it had never had before." It "seemed to look sweeter and happier and more inviting than ever" (1266). Her personal Merlin, "cast over her - a spell" (1266) that set her world ablaze. "With him in it, the red glow" consumes her, "the perfection of love had come — love so wonderful that the mere thought of it made her eyes brim now" (1266)... "So enamored was she of Arthur" (1267). With his sorcery, "he had taken possession of her, behind the closed door, he had held her and kissed her on the mouth at least a dozen times while she pretended to push against his coat and struggle" (1266). "It was not simple trickery ... her own future could find no better outlet than this" (1272). "When Arthur came there was a new heaven and earth" (1264).

Arthur himself echoes the brilliance of the rainbow and the elusive pot of gold, "he appeared with that arch smile, out of nothing, as it were. He had come and gone... a color of light so transfiguring as to seem celestial, but now alas, wholly dissipated" (1263). His features are "attractive as those of a coin," (1264), gold, gorgeous, and gaudy! Looking from a distance you see the sparkle, but upon closer examination, you find "it all but worthless" (1271). Arthur, not untrue to the nature of a rainbow, is the very essence of a dream "almost created by her own thoughts" (1268). Among Shirley's "horribly gloomy, dull, and gaunt Bethune Street," (1266), Arthur becomes her "single ray of hope" (1269). The restless nature of a rainbow is also glimmering within Arthur; "He never seemed to have any fixed, clear future for himself in mind — to little settled" (1267). A rainbow has many colors that constantly change. Arthur has the same chameleon-like characteristics: "He was gay and unthinking at times, unconsciously so, and yet loving and tender at others — nearly always so" (1267). In all reality, would a rainbow really be as spectacular if not held in comparison with the serene blue sky?

Without the paleness of one, you cannot truly appreciate the splendor of another. Barton reeks of dullness, "shy, phlegmatic, and obedient," whereas

Arthur is the exact opposite, "dreamful, energetic, and masterful" (1267). "Barton was so simple, so good natured, so stolid and matter of fact, so different to Arthur whom ... she was loving now as Barton loved her — slavishly, hopelessly" (1269).

Once Shirley views the magnificent spectrum of the rainbow, the ordinary pallid sky just won't do. "Barton might be good enough ... Arthur was so much better!" (1265). Words cannot describe how the comeliness of the sky pales in comparison to the grandeur of the rainbow. "She had not even mentioned Barton to Arthur" (1265). Shirley does manage to bring out a little color in Barton. Because of her seeing Arthur, Barton stands before her jealously, "a green shade over his eyes" (1270). His boldness is evident as he confronts Shirley about her escapades. "Do you think you did just right, Shirley? You might have sent word, mightn't you? Who was it — the new fellow you won't tell me about?" (1268).

Like in the search for gold, Shirley embarks upon her journey with bewilderment. "Would it ever be?" and if so would it "lead her to some sad end? Sometimes it had always seemed as if this whole thing were a glorious interlude and that it could not last" (1267). "She wished she and Arthur might be doing — going somewhere together — far, far away from all the commonplace things and life" (1266). Is it possible for a rainbow to shine where it has shown before? Oh! how "the agony feels of the long days waiting, the brooding, and the wondering" (1268). "She waited ... hoping against hope" (1269). Although her path is clouded with doubt, she treads onward, "there must be no turning back now" (1273).

What if Arthur never comes back? What will she do if he does? If you squint your eyes while looking at the rainbow, you can see the real beauty, even with the stinging of the tears. "Always there was Barton, the humble or faithful...he adored her" (1269). With her heart so heavy and her cheeks moist with memories, "she turned her step disconsolately homeward" (1270).

Shirley becomes caught up in Arthur's blinding, brilliance of boyhood. He mirrors the rainbow and the "catch penny" pot of gold. He leaves Shirley with only the memory. "There isn't an hour, it seems, but some little bit of you comes back---a dear sweet bit" (1263). To every lie there is some truth. What Shirley finds at the end of the rainbow is gold: "Fool's Gold!"

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Illustrator: Bron Bass

Good vs. Evil in “Ethan Brand”

Lela Cessna

There is a lot of evil in Hawthorne's stories. In “Ethan Brand,” the title character is evil, and Bartram and his young son and the villagers are good. Or so it seems. As the story progresses, there is no clear-cut line between good and evil. Ethan Brand is a lime-burner who leaves to find the Unpardonable Sin. He hopes that he won't find it. His idea was an intellectual exercise, and he set out to see if such a thing exists. Only after many years of searching does he realize what the ultimate sin must be. There is more to fear in this story than the devil.

After eighteen years, Ethan Brand is drawn back to the kiln. His search is ended, he says, because the Unpardonable Sin is in his heart. He says it is—“The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony!” (800)

Lime-burning is a lonely job, and staring into the flames every night has an effect on Ethan Brand and Bartram. It is “...an intensely thoughtful occupation...” and Ethan Brand was a thinker (797). Bartram is a simple man who only thinks about the job at hand. He, however, is superstitious and believes that Ethan Brand has called forth the devil from the kiln when he worked there.

Though Bartram is afraid of Ethan Brand, he is attracted to him and is excited that he is there. However, when he sends his son to tell the villagers that Ethan Brand is back, he regrets being alone with the man:

-He felt that the little fellow's presence had been a barrier between his guest and himself, and that he must now deal heart to heart, with a man who, on his own confession, had committed the only crime for which Heaven could afford no mercy. That crime, in its indistinct blackness, seemed to overshadow him. The lime-burner's own sins rose up within him and made his memory riotous with a throng of evil shapes that asserted their kindred with the Master Sin, whatever it might be, which it was within the scope of man's corrupted nature to conceive and cherish. They were all of one family; they went to and from between his breast and Ethan Brand's and carried dark greetings from one to the other. (799)

Perhaps Bartram is afraid of having his own sins exposed. He knows Ethan Brand is a sinner, and he knows that he himself could be recognized as a sinner. When Ethan Brand opens the door of the kiln, Bartram tells him not to bring forth the devil. Brand says that he doesn't need the devil. He has left him behind. Either the devil already has him, or he is worse than the devil. He

says that the devil is only concerned with "half-way sinners" like Bartram (799).

The people of the village are glad to see Ethan Brand. However, after talking to them, he begins to doubt if he has found the Unpardonable Sin, and if he has, is it in him? "The three villagers whom critics have sometimes misunderstood, function to attack the ridiculousness of Brand's Idea and his claims of success" (Harris). In the article by Mark Harris, he takes the position that Ethan Brand didn't find what he was searching for. That is the reason he came back, and because the villagers don't believe him or don't care, he begins to doubt himself. "The three (villagers) are has-beens, failures, like Brand; what distinguishes them from Brand is that they are acknowledged failures" (Harris).

When an old dog suddenly begins chasing its short tail with no chance of catching it, Ethan Brand makes the analogy between his life-long pursuit and the dog chasing its tail. He laughs when he thinks of how he has spent his life. "Curtis Dahl sees Brand's laugh as 'proof of his understanding of his terrible and ironic predicament'.." (Harris).

Brand thinks of the days when he had love for mankind and prayed that he wouldn't find the Unpardonable Sin, but then his heart hardened and "...Ethan Brand became a fiend. He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect, and now, as his highest effort and inevitable development,-as the bright and gorgeous flower, and rich, delicious fruit of his life's labor,-he had produced the Unpardonable Sin!" (805)

Everything after Ethan Brand's death looks bright and beautiful as if he has taken all the evil with him. Little Joe said "...that strange man is gone, and the sky and the mountains all seem glad of it!" (806)

When Bartram sees the skeleton in the kiln and the outline of the heart, he comments that the heart looks like marble. Then he breaks up the skeleton with his pole and is glad of the half bushel of lime it will add to his kiln. Here Bartram shows that his own heart is hardening when he shows no emotion about the death of Ethan Brand. He feels so little that he calls his small, sensitive son to witness the horrible sight of the skeleton in the kiln.

In his article, Mark Harris says that Ethan Brand probably committed suicide because he thought he was a failure, and the villagers didn't care if he had found the ultimate sin. He wasn't as important in their eyes as he thought he would be. Harris sees Brand as an ordinary man trying to get attention.

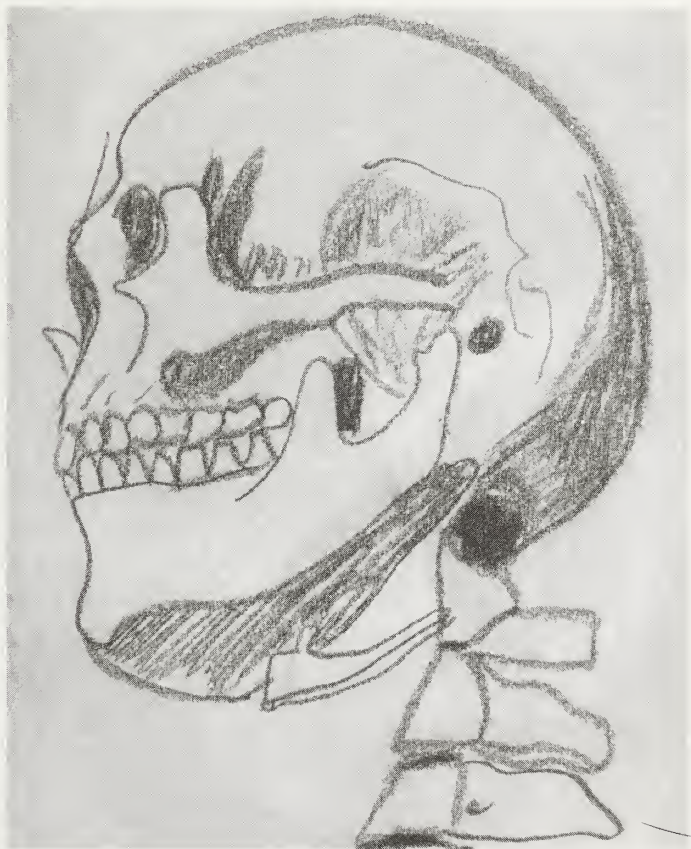
I see Ethan Brand as much more complicated. He began as a simple man with a simple job that allowed him a lot of time to think. His thoughts led him to wonder if there was one sin for which God would not forgive him. It was only after much searching that he decided that the Unpardonable Sin must be the hardening of the heart against his fellow man, and the turning away from God as he had done because of his experiences with people that he had met. He committed suicide, I think, because he thought that he had nothing left to live for, and he had no chance for salvation.

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Illustrator: Louis Sharp

Maturity

Stacy Thompson

From the beginning to the end of *The Once and Future King*, T.H. White describes Arthur's life from a child to an adult. Beginning in the Castle Sauvage and ending in the court of Camelot, White portrays Arthur as a child educated by a magician into a strong, dependable adult. Throughout the book, Arthur learns constantly by trial and error. White shows that learning for oneself can help build a strong, reliable self-image for the future.

As a child, Merlyn, the magician, educates Arthur. He is not called Arthur during his childhood; he is called Wart. Merlyn does not teach as most teachers do; he lets Wart learn about things for himself. To achieve this goal, Merlyn changes Wart into different types of animals. Merlyn turns Wart into a fish one day, and he learns from the King of the Moat that Might is Right. Merlyn tells Wart, "Education is experience, and the essence of experience is self-reliance" (White 46). When Arthur gets into trouble while doing one of his lessons, Merlyn tells him to deal with it, so he learns for himself. He uses this trial by error routine to teach Arthur to think quickly on his feet, so he will be able to make his own decisions in the future.

Arthur becomes king at a very young age, so during his teen years, he uses the information he learned as a child to help him as King. Arthur reflects a very positive feeling toward people. First, he uses his intelligence to establish Justice in Camelot, so his people will be safe. Then he uses his intelligence he has gained over the years to support his idea of the Round Table; therefore, he can use Might for Right. He is always thinking about how he can help his people, which also portrays a positive image of him. As Arthur and Merlyn were talking about a previous war one day, Arthur says, "I was thinking of myself, I ought to have thought of the people who had no armor" (225). This shows that he is human and does make mistakes; however, he is not afraid to admit them.

As Arthur grows older he becomes wiser. He projects a very positive influence in his adulthood by doing the right thing, although his heart does not want him to. His own closest friend and his wife, Lancelot and Guenever, hurt him dramatically by betraying him. They commit adultery, and King Arthur uses his own laws to prosecute him. When his idea first became a law, Arthur stated, "The same laws apply to everyone" (510). As Arthur prosecutes Lancelot and Guenever, he does it because it his duty as King, and because it is the right thing to do.

The Once and Future King, by T.H. White, deals with the life of a young boy who becomes King by pulling a sword out of a stone. White portrays Arthur as a very positive character throughout the book. Realizing that people are not always going to be there for him to help with his decision, Arthur thinks for himself; one of the many and main things Merlyn taught him. Being educated by the trial and error routine allows Arthur to build a strong, respective

character of himself with the help of time. Arthur learns to stop thinking of himself, but to think of the ones he loved and the people who love and respect him. These are things that make Arthur such a positive character throughout his life.

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June 1987.

Scholarship Award

Wesson Attendance Center



Illustrator: Jo Ann King

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Vestis virrum reddit

James Conley

That was the first lesson in a Latin course I had in the fifth grade. It means "Clothes Make the Man." When I was eleven years old I did not really understand what that meant. But as I get older, living in "The Gap Generation," I understand more and more what this means.

Clothes do have a great influence on people, especially teenagers. Clothes can determine how a person feels about himself. Clothes can determine how other people treat him. In *King Lear* the clothes of the characters are used to show changes in the story. When Lear was a successful king, his clothes showed his royalty and others gave him respect and dignity. At the end of the story, when he is almost insane, his clothes are shabby and he is almost naked. Edgar also goes from wealth and respect down to nakedness. At the end of the story, King Lear and Edgar felt that they had lost all their power. Not having the clothes they were used to was a constant reminder to them of how low they had gotten. People saw their clothes and treated them how they looked.

Teenagers and other people of today experience this too. All the "cool" kids at school have top quality clothes. When they can have name brand clothes and shoes it make them feel important inside. Sometimes it gives them confidence. When a person has confidence, people pay more attention to them. They have some power with other people. A person can, and probably should, have confidence anyway, no matter what they wear. But that can be hard to do without a little help. Clothes can be that help. In that case, "clothes make the man" because they give him the inner feeling that helps him succeed.

The opposite is nakedness. It could be said, "Nakedness undoes a man." Nakedness can be used in stories to show someone defenseless or without power, especially if they went from nice clothes down to hardly any. In *King Lear's* case, he lost his power and was taken advantage of because everyone thought he was weak and crazy. Everyone treated Edgar like a peasant or worse because of what his clothes looked like.

People today can be made to feel the same way. If their clothes are very different, or even a little different, from the clothes of those around them, they often feel like they are not respected. This is why it is important to know ahead of time how to dress for certain occasions. No one wants to go somewhere and be dressed too differently from everyone else. The effect that it can have on most people is that they feel almost naked because everyone seems to be looking at them and they feel awkward. Clothes can have a great influence on how a person feels and how other people look at them.

Clothes are a status symbol although they should not be. Since Shakespeare's time, this has been true. People have come to rely on clothes for the many ways they tell about people. Official people, like policemen or store employees, wear uniforms to quickly convey their position. In *King Lear's* time,

kings were expected to dress in certain ways. But people have started to judge each other by the clothes they wear. Even though some people would like to have this changed, it is not going to happen. Human nature has not changed much since Shakespeare's days up until now. Clothes can determine how a person feels inside about himself and how he looks to others and how they are going to treat him. Clothes will probably always "make the man."

Scholarship Award
Franklin High School



Illustrator: Jo Ann King



Illustrator: Misty Dunn

Fire in the Night:

File # 02-08-68

Diane Walker

Recently the Mississippi News Media has covered the reopening of a Civil Rights case in Forest County. It is a case dealing with the fire bombing of a black owned business by a former Ku Klux Klansman.

As I listened to the media and read the newspapers, facts brought out about the case reopened some painful memories. Memories I thought I had buried, resurfaced.

I was only a child of thirteen, but I was old enough to remember. As a seventh grader in junior high at Newellton, Louisiana, I had no idea what segregation and desegregation was all about. However, I do recall all of the times I had been referred to as a "nigger lover" and how the words made me cringe each time I would hear them.

One day my mom had to come and check us out of school early because someone had called her and told her that we would be hurt if we rode the bus home. Back in 1968 I didn't realize that people were teaching their children to hate the blacks, but my dad and mom did not teach me to do that. Now I realize that it was ignorance and prejudice that taught others to call me names.

My dad and another man owned a business in Tallulah, Louisiana. It was in the "quarters" as we said back then. The washateria, used mostly by the blacks, was a way that dad would supplement his income. Our so-called friends called us names and threatened us because Daddy chose this business to help his family. Both Dad and his partner taught us how to deal with the racism and the prejudice. They never called the blacks by the "N" word. Because of this time in my life, I still hate that word today.

There were times when Ms. Rachel, the caretaker, would call Daddy in the middle of the night and he would have to go there. Once I remember it being broken into and another time it was set afire. Some young black men, who resented Ms. Rachel working for my dad and his partner, vandalized the building on several occasions.

It was a time that I remember everyone blaming someone else for something that would happen. There was fighting on the streets of the small town where I grew up. The Ku Klux Klan was a group mostly heard about on television, but now the group had infiltrated my hometown.

They did not care who they hurt or threatened. I loved to walk to school, but there was a time when I could not do this. My family and I did not feel safe walking anywhere. Dad would receive phone calls and mom would be scared. Memories of fear ruled us for a while.

Things in our small town were far from normal, but there was a time when the phone calls ceased. Dad thought that the worst was over until the night

of February 8, 1968. It was a night of family fun. Granny and Gramps had come to stay for a few days and this was the first time since Christmas we had seen them. Granny always cooked, and with Mom in the bed sick, my sister and I got to help. Granny did not care if we made a mess and did not clean it up. Gramps and Daddy were in the long, wide hallway playing with my brothers and their remote control cars.

It takes a long time for children who don't want to go to bed to give hugs and kisses to four adults. My siblings and I put off going to bed as long as we could. Darrell, Ricky, David, and Robert went to their room and JoAnn and I went to ours. As we settled in our bed, we snuggled under the big quilt. It was very cold outside and the big house was hard to heat. JoAnn and I slept with our long robes on over our pajamas. Both of us got hot and stood up to pull our robes off. Just as we got back in our bed, the wall at the foot of our bed fell in. Fire was everywhere! Terrified, we screamed! Daddy burst into our room as he jerked his pants on. He shouted at Mom and me to get water. We tried to go to the kitchen, but there was no kitchen. It too was a full blaze. One of us ran next door to call the fire department, and Dad was trying to get everyone else out of the house.

Back then no one thought about fire escape plans and we did not have one. All I know is that when we were outside there was no David. At one point my oldest brother had him, but had to let go of him to open the door. When Darrell reached for David he was not there. David had gone back into the house and the smoke was so thick we couldn't see which way he had gone.

All of us were screaming! "David! David! If you hear us answer us." There was no answer and Dad rushed back in the house shouting, "David! David!" He was trying to save my brother, but the odds were against him. We knew that the exploding ammunition, thick billowing smoke, and heat from the fire would hinder the rescue attempt by Daddy. Not only were we shouting for David, but now for Daddy. When he came out he was on fire. Dad was wrestled to the ground and held until medical assistance arrived. He kept telling us to let him up, but we knew if we let him up, he would head straight back into the house.

By this time the fire department had arrived, but they could not enter until all of the ammunition in the house had stopped exploding. An eternity passed. Standing outside in the yard, knowing David was in the house was unbearable and it is a gut- wrenching feeling I never want to experience again. Mom had gone into shock and was taken to the hospital with Dad.

I don't recall exactly how long we stood outside and watched our home cave in. Until this day I can see the house collapsing and I knew David was in there. The pain I feel as I write is almost as strong now as it was thirty years ago.

Finally someone grabbed me by the hand and I left the scene with my siblings to go to the house of a friend. My Granny and Gramp were taken to a friend's house and they called Daddy's sister to come and get them.

I was still frightened. There were five of us and no one family had room for all of us, so we were divided among friends. No two of us stayed together

except for my oldest brother and the baby. Mr. and Mrs. Clark, an older couple in our community, took me home with them, but I was still alone and worried about Mom and Dad. Lying in bed at their home, I tried to make sense of what had just happened to my family.

The next day we went back to see if anything could be salvaged. Nothing. We found a can of burnt change, but that was all other than ashes and rubble. Nothing remained of our home. I remember standing there crying. Crying not only for my loss, but also for the loss of my little brother. At this time I did not know what an effect this tragic night would have on my life.

Daddy could not attend the funeral service for David because he was too hurt to leave the hospital for even a little while. Mom left long enough to attend the service and burial, but she had to go back. Still our family was apart.

My daddy was a well respected man in our parish. We heard from people we had not seen or heard from in years. Inspite of all the cards and letters, as a family we were grateful for thoughts and prayers, —we were hurting still.

I worried if we would ever be back together. For three weeks and three days we were apart, but finally we were together again. It was the first time since the fire we had a chance to grieve as a family. I remember how hard it was for anyone to talk at first. Finally Daddy said that he loved us all and for awhile we all wept together.

It was not until six weeks after the fire that the Ku Klux Klan was mentioned. Because of Dad's condition, he was not told about the suspicion of the Ku Klux Klan being involved. We found out that shortly after the firemen returned to the station that night another alarm sounded. This time it was his partner's equipment shed. Coincidence? Dad sure didn't think so. He believed that the Ku Klux Klan had a significant part in the fire.

No one ever found solid evidence in the case and it was left alone. If the Ku Klux Klan was to blame, the person or persons responsible had a great burden to bear. Forgive? I don't know if I ever will. Someone took the life of my little brother and I feel that someone should have been accountable then, as well as now. I know that God will be the ultimate judge in this tragedy, but it does not bring the final closure for me.

It was not until the recent media coverage that I began to re-live that tragic night and over the years I have thought a lot about what David would have done with his life. I have wondered what he may have become. Would he have been a successful businessman, a doctor, a lawyer, or just a real fine daddy? Because of the ignorance and prejudice in the decade of the 1960's I may never know the answer that question.

2nd Place Winner
1999 Southern Literary Festival

The Farm, a Wonderful Remembrance

Shanna Kinsey

The farm... where I spent all of my youth, is a remembrance of a time in my life where everything seemed so breathtaking and endless. Most of what I recall of those days were the beauty of it all; the united family, the lessons in life I learned, and hmmm... I can still smell those delicious, sweet potato pies! I can remember the faint smell of fresh cut crops, the ever so contented cows in the pasture, and the aggressive chickens pecking peas off the ground, where they fell from being shelled. I remember the daily hysterics of us screaming and laughing from being chased down the pipeline by our goats. I remember the laughter of the children jumping off a rope into the middle of the muddy river and my sisters pulling circus acts by standing on each other's shoulders to gather crab apples off the tree. These stunts always set my father into oblivion—because besides us being his little hard workers—we were ladies first. As you can probably tell we had our share of spankings.

I loved my time on the farm, but now that I think about it, when I was younger I thoroughly detested the everyday chores of maintaining animals and gardens. My father making us get up at sunrise was truly devastating to my sisters and me, especially when our buddies got to sleep and watch cartoons. Now that I have a daughter of my own, I miss our farm life even more. I miss the secure way I felt. I miss the peace and quiet, which of course I don't receive now. My daughter, Lauryn, thinks that talking twenty-four hours a day is good for the spirit.

I can still feel the plants rubbing all over my arms and legs, wet from the morning dew. I can feel the hot sun burning my skin and the cool sensations of the breezes blowing across my back, putting the burns to ease. I can still hear the crowing of our roosters, the sound of tractors combining, plowing, bush-hogging and all the other necessary jobs they did. I can hear how loud the dump trucks were pulling in and out of our gravel pit, the drivers waving to us working in our gardens and probably feeling sorry for us being out in the heat of the day. I felt sorry for myself. I can still see our beautiful land as it changed colors season after season. I especially can see the full buckets of peas, butterbeans, and string beans, waiting to be shelled or snapped. I can still see all the faces... weary from being tired, but still carrying on conversations with our helpful neighbors who had stopped by to help us put our food up for the winter; of course they always received their share.

Sundays on our farm were spent going to church, eating huge dinners and sleeping the rest of the day. After we ate, everyone would talk at the dinner table for an hour, and then Daddy would tell us it was time for a nap. We would lie down in our beds with the sounds of nature blowing through our window.

Crickets, birds, frogs, and the flapping of our curtains from the breezes would put us to sleep within minutes. Sunday was our only rest day. It was also my favorite day. I remember our church clearly; it was white and so small that when you walked the whole church shook. Because my father made my sisters and me sing while he played the guitar every other Sunday, I started singing with the adult choir at age twelve. There never was a question about not going to church. You either went to church or you were "sent to the guillotine." My sisters and I used to laughingly whisper this behind my father's back.

There are really certain times that I think about my life as a younger child. Like when I cook for Lauryn, my daughter, I think to myself that she really needs a full cooked meal every night instead of a corn dog and macaroni and cheese. When I am sad or depressed I think about the comfort of the farm in the sense of what my father used to say, "You have to keep working at it, you cannot give up, there is no time to worry or feel sorry for yourself." When I wash clothes I am thankful to God that I do not have to hang out clothes in fifteen-degree weather, and when it is cold, I am thankful for central heating so my daughter and I will not freeze during the night. Yes, there are so many things I am sure that you would think I would like to have changed, but you are wrong. I am glad I lived the way I did because it made me who I am: a strong independent person who has experienced a rotten hand at life these past couple of adult years. I made it out alive because of the way I was raised....on our farm.

I cannot wait for the day to come to have pig, goats, and horses of my own; the day when I can walk through an open, beautiful field where I can lie down and look up at the sky. I cannot wait to go swimming in the river with the excitement of a child and have home-grown vegetables in my freezer that I grew in a garden myself. I long for the day when I can go sit under the shady limbs of the oak trees and read a book in the complete silence with the gentle breezes that used to turn the pages of my books. Most of all I cannot wait for my daughter to have the experiences of all this greatness.... I wonder what she will think? I know, of course, she will not appreciate the hard work that it takes to have animals and gardens, but I know Lauryn and she loves outdoors so that is a start. If you ever get the chance to stay with someone on a farm, I would encourage it. It is a wonderful place to rest...your soul that is. Taking care of all the animals and gardens will teach you about how hard people have to work for their survival, and sometimes ours. It will give you an appreciation of the how different and close these families are and how their values and morals have remained the same no matter what the changes in civilization. It is a complete and different world; and yes, it is very breathtaking and wonderful.



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Faith

David Love

Faith is the color of a grandmother's smile.
It is the joyful tone of a lark lifting its voice.
It tastes like a vapor; sweet, but vanishing quickly.
It smells like a heavy incense burning in a Hebrew altar.
Faith looks like a Savior with pierced hands outstretched.
Faith makes me feel emancipated.

Faith is the hue of the horizon gently melting into the sea.
It is the sound of laughter after a rain of catastrophe.
It tastes like the salty tears of intercession.
Faith smells like the mighty fragrance of a thousand pieces.
It looks like an impossibility, but it is not.
Faith makes me feel hopeful.

Faith is the color of sacrificial blood flowing down from Calvary.
It is the sound of Joshua's trumpet on the seventh day.
Faith tastes like the bittersweet herbs of an apothecary.
It smells like crimson roses blooming in the bleakest of winters.
It looks like a lion lying down with a lamb.
It makes me feel blessed assurance.

Faith is the substance of things desired;
The evidence of things unseen.

Scholarship Award
Brookhaven High School

FLEETING RETURN

Translated by Carl Cobb

How was it, dear my Lord, how was it there?
Oh, heart perfidious, mind not precise!
Was it much like the breeze gone in a trice?
Or like the fleeing of the spring elsewhere?

So slight, so voluble, so light as air,
Like summer's thistledown... Yes, imprecise
Like nice smile lost when laughter it entice...!
Or like a pennant, on the air with flair!

Flag, smiling, thistledown, in wingéd dress
Springtime in June, breeze in its purity...
How madly went your carnival, how sad!

All of your changing turned to nothingness—
Blind bee of bitterness, oh memory—
I don't know you, do know the flight you had!

RETORNO FUGAZ

Juan Ramón Jiménez

¿Cómo era, Dios mío, cómo era?
—¡oh, corazón falaz, mente indecisa!
¿Era como el pasaje de la brisa?
¿Como la huida de la primavera?

Tan leve, tan volumble, tan ligera
cual estival vilano... ¡Sí! Imprecisa
como sonrisa que se pierde en risa...
¡Vana en el aire, igual que una bandera!

¡Bandera, sonreír, vilano, alada
primavera de junio, brisa pura...!
¡Qué loco fue tu carnival, qué triste!

Todo tu cambiar trocóse en nada
—¡memoria, ciega abaja de amargura!—
¡No sé cómo eras, yo que sé que fuiste!

Mano en la Noche, Mano de la Noche

Carl Cobb

Hand in the night, in daily throes of grief,
Hand in the dark, in humble neediness,
Hand in the night, in clutches of distress,
Hand reaching outward, trusting for relief.

Hand touching hand, to reconfirm belief,
Hand from the night, hand touching quiet to bless,
Hand from the dark, thus bringing peacefulness
Hand firm in hand, relief that is belief.

In simple human grace, hand in the night,
Hand darkly dreaming, hopeful of caress,
Hand in the night in reassuring flight.

Hand from the night, in shy responsiveness;
Two hands encircled, in ring of dark light,
Two hands in simple human blessedness.

Bury Me Under The Tulip Tree

Robin Boyd

...Grant me this, my final wish

When I die, after you've bidden me farewell,
do this for me, if you will?

Bring no flowers, neither roses nor carnations,
just water my shade daily.

Admire its beauty as you remember me,
and in the time when blooms open, smile,
for I am enjoying the fragrance they emit.

Laugh as the birds hide amongst them,
singing their praises to you and all,
entertaining me.

When its cup-shaped buds give way to gravity,
leave them be.

They will provide me with a precious cover,
a blanket of sorts.

So, yes, I ask this most unusual request:
when all is over, done with, and I've faced my death,
allow me one more pleasure, please,
one to last indefinitely.

...bury me under the tulip tree.

The Abstract World of Concrete

Robin Boyd

A house built on sinking sand;
pillars of gold look so strong,
holding up the world in no man's land.
Lighting strikes, thunder rolls,
rains fall, breaking the soul.
Boundaries formed, bridges burnt,
foundations crumble, braces cave.
Rivers form from streams
of dreams that began to drizzle
raging to a flood of fear.
Lost in the world to never be found.
Lost in the world, the abstract world
of smiles and hugs and laughs and cheer.
Lost in the world, a person wanders...
searching...looking...never finding...
but witnessing as the flood rages,
pouring out more than the house can stand.
Watch it fall...and sink into that depth of fog;
into that thickness of disillusion;
into that abstract world of concrete.

Sweet Bitterness

Misti Thornhill

Walking through the garden gate,
I noticed suddenly the sweetest smell.
The pink opulence of the perpetrator
Caused me to stop and reflect.
There it was, sheer elegance in stature.

Of all the others it caught my attention,
So succulent its petals
As they burst forth with fragrance.
I inhaled slowly to savor the experience.
Lightheaded and awestruck, I lost control.

Before I knew it, I had cut them all.
Now, what would I do,
For surely they would die?
Putting them in water would do for a while.
I sat and stared for the longest time

Wishing I could become this graceful masterpiece.
Its sweetness would erase all my bitter thoughts;
Nothing evil can abide where such perfection exists.
Yes, I'd trade places in a heartbeat.
Rose, sweet rose, my bitterness for a rose.

Unseen Fires

Misti Thornhill

On my palm, the fire sat.
I touched him. It came alive,
Spreading over my entire being.
Becoming a contagious enigma,
Its results began to spread.
Fire dripped from my tongue;
Lie upon lie covered my deceit.
Starting little fires in every room,
Of my life, it left a smoldering
Bed of memories and charred promises.
Covered with the remains that once were
Us, I mourned in "sackcloth and ashes."

Desert Giants

Misti Thornhill

In the desert the water stood at attention.
Rising from the dusty earth, the only
refreshment for miles.
Invisible, yet reaching high above the
surface sod. Arms pointed up; great
scarecrow of the barren land.
"Keep away," he warns. "this is
no place for you."
Green and prickly he rules this
domain, until a great humpback
appears and makes his claim.
"Lunch," said the camel.

Atop A Daffodil

Daniel Holloway

These eyes with hollow iris
can speak more clearly than any words.
Faces lost amidst the masses,
lost within this living herd.
But today, quite unnaturally,
I stopped to view a butterfly
who sat so continently in concrete shadows
and opened cobalt wings toward a waiting sky.

He sat atop a daffodil
that swayed so careless at four o'clock.
And before I knew quite what I saw
I felt one knee then this one drop
to the ashy, gritted sidewalk's edge
that chased this lonely city garden.
People swerved, like drunken cars,
and went about their living.

I asked the resting kaleidoscope
if tomorrow ever crossed his mind.
His answer flew in with the pollen,
then spread his wings as if to fly.
Then, so calmly, settled he
that I would have thought him dead
if not for the gentle rise of his wings
and the easy motions of his head.

And I, by briefcase, made a pact
to no one else but me.
To slow down life, breathe in deep,
and try my best to see
the beauty of the simplest things.
To look past building, see the sky,
see life's little mutinies,
and whisper close to butterflies.



Illustrator: Jo Ann King

English Rain

Daniel Holloway

So much time has passed beneath
the bridges of the Thames
since we walked its stony streets
and listened to winter's wind.
And I was lost in city mile,
but ever more lost in you,
in the shadow of Big Ben.

I remember smiling at the night
and singing of your soul.
The endless glow of London light
found my eyes, my ears, and told
the simplest mummer's tale.
I felt true fire for the first
as stars fell in my ale.

We walked quietly through stone towers
lit by the dance of candle's light.
How I recall the magic hours
before the grip of easy night
crept so silent upon the hills
and found its bed in window sills,
while shortly did the world hold still.

And heaven seemed so near to earth,
and England seemed more home
than any other patch of dirt
that ever I have know.
And London rain could soothe the soul.
And today was just as days of old.
And time could not retain its hold.

But all the poems of the times
and all the dreams that come
could not erase your hazel eyes
or be glad of our return.
For London calls me, siren-like, back unto its stones.
Perhaps, in darkness I will write another of those poems
describing you, the English rain, and the wandering in my bones.

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The Playground

Halley Ellen Murray

Severin pushed the lid open, his shutter-like eyes blinking and widening to adjust to his awakening. He stood up and stretched his thin, lithe body, stiff now from the sleep and confinement. Bending under the small opening he left the old marble crypt, stopping to run his fingers over the Parker family name above the door. He moved off toward the old playground, located in what was once Congo Square, now called Louis Armstrong Park. The park was closed and locked, but it didn't matter to him. He was drawn there, to this place of his death, by some deep need, some part that was lost to him. There was no victim there, no one to be used to sustain his existence. All of the children had gone home hours before as he once had, fleeing darkness, the predators that roamed the street in need of a child for their perversion; home to mothers, to supper, to television, to safety. Only that once had he stayed too long in the darkness, under the golden moon that hung over New Orleans. Stayed too long for one last fling on the swings before heading home. But he wasn't alone that night, he never reached home, when he left the playground he was forever altered by his encounter with the vampire that found him. Once he had feared the darkness. Now it was his only friend, his companion and his nurturing breast.

He strolled through the locked arched entry, and past the rustling palm trees. He saw the jungle gym, the monkey bars, the merry-go-round, the old swings, hanging crooked and rusted in the dim light from the street that filtered through the banana trees. The trees concealed the tall iron bars of the fence. He moved to the swings and sat down in one, pushing with his feet, unthinking, feeling his deadness with no fear, no desire, no hope, only hunger and what? A touch of sadness or was it madness? But he wasn't supposed to feel. Only exist in this twisted death. Dead and yet not? He didn't fully understand it, but he did not question it either. What would be the point?

Dust drifted up and settled on his shoes and the legs of his pants as his feet moved through the sandy soil. His anger at his creator, his murderer, had at first frightened him. As had the feeling of desolation, of feeling disembodied, and his predatory need. He had learned to accept the resentment of being semi-present.

His eyes wandered up into the thick leaves of the ancient oaks above him. The other boy was sitting on the top of the old tree house, so still that Severin had not seen him at first. His little face glowed in the darkness, alabaster, gaunt, and smiling at him, both with his large blue eyes and his thin, sensual lips. The boy climbed down, as agile as a park squirrel and faced him. He was alive, warm, breathing, trusting, gentle, and friendly; a lonely, homeless, street child.

"Come and play with me," the strange boy said to him. Severin followed, his dead heart, the one that was not supposed to feel any emotion, now filled with longing, but not for blood.

Chains creaking, arms and legs pumping, they swung, higher and higher, up near the stars. They climbed the domed jungle gym and hung suspended on the bars, hands gripping, legs walking the air, twisting, turning, running. He watched the boy's fair hair bounce as he hung suspended by his knees, his thin stick-like arms dangling towards the ground. Then on to the Merry-go-round, pushing faster and faster until their breath burned in their chests. The pull of the centrifugal force tightened the skin across the bones in his face as the moonlight and shadows blurred past with their speed. It slowed, drifted, and stopped. They walked toward a bench to rest, and it rose in him. The need, the hunger, the yearning; strong and sudden, not to be put off. He approached from behind, fangs growing and ready, his face twisted in cruelty, and feeling disgusted with himself, he grasped the delicate shoulder ahead of him. He felt the fragile bone and the tender flesh under the strength of his fingers. Severin turned the boy toward him, his eyes glowing with his intent, his face hungry, and his face hungry, and his spirit mean. Under the wash worn shirt he felt the wings. They were nestled under the dark skin, buried beside the skinny shoulder blades, folded, hidden and tight. Dormant. He felt the shaft of the feathers, the silkiness of them, then the power of muscles as the skin split open and they were unfurled. They opened wide, amber colored, shimmering, gossamer, and soft but with muscle and tendon beneath them, controlling them. The boy's heart-shaped face was bleached and startled, his body poised and ready to escape, to soar, to leave him there. Leave him alone in the darkened, haunted playground. Wide, unblinking blue eyes held his green orbs. He was spellbound, transfixed, not frightened, never frightened anymore. The wings hovered and his hand slipped from the boy's shoulder as he rose, hovering above Severin, looking down at him with uncertainty.

"What are you? A ghost? An angel?" Severin whispered, reeling back with astonishment.

"Dead, the same as you. Had I blood, I would offer it to you, but there is none, nor any heartbeat. I am lonely, as are you. There are not so many of us here. Not your kind, nor mine."

The wings moved behind the boy, stirring Severin's raven hair, and then they slowly lowered him until his toes touched the ground softly, silently. They folded, and returned to the hidden pockets in his hollow shoulder blades, and the skin healed over them. He stared into the vampire's green eyes. Severin's body stiffened in apprehension as he gaped in stunned silence, shocked by the display.

"Don't fear me?" Severin asked.

The boy shook his head and then he laughed, with a sound like a breeze tinkling a fine crystal chandelier. He reached out and took Severin's cold hand into his.

"Friends?" the boy asked.

The vampire boy nodded, his voice lost in his wonder as he gawked in disbelief.

"Race ya!" The other boy suddenly challenged. Severin hesitated only a moment before darting after him. They raced off across the playground, yelling,

pushing, tripping, their legs pistoning wildly. Their voices rose shrilly, eagerly, almost joyfully, spiraling upward pas the dust rising under their feet and into the dark, moonlight dappled leaves.

A policeman on the street outside the fence stopped and cocked his head toward the park. He stood very still waiting and listening. For a second he thought he had heard the sounds of children playing inside the darkened park. But he shook his head. It was only the sounds of the wind in the leaves of the banana trees, or the sounds of traffic on North Rampart Street, he decided, as he walked on down the block.

Scholarship Award
Franklin High School





Illustrator: Jo Ann King

Little Susie's Smile

Robin Boyd

Living where I do, I see many people. I see old, young, sick, well, happy, sad, and...to be blunt...dead. I don't actually see the bodies, but I do see the effects. The corner of Forty-first and Lake Drive is known for one thing: Lake Drive Memorial. I live on the adjacent corner, and though it's probably impolite, on the days of funerals, I sit in my tree house and watch.

I'm only nine, but I'm no stranger to death. Three times my mother has brought home planters of lilies. For my grandmother, for my mother's half-brother, and for little Susie. I'll never understand why she had to leave so soon. I mean, I knew she would go one day—we all will. But her infinite cough refused to let up and, finally, one day last spring it won the battle that little Susie didn't even know she was fighting.

Living here all my life, I've learned a lot about people in general and a little about specific people. For instance, did you know that you could almost identify an unknown person by the types of flowers people send? Pale pink or blue carnations? Probably a baby. Roses? Probably a female. Orange, yellow, or burnt red colors? Possibly born in the fall. Pastels? In the spring. Now, this isn't always the case. I remember last year I watched yellow roses being unloaded from a van. I used my prior knowledge and assumed that a lady had passed away. Come to find out that, the first flower the man had given his wife was a yellow rose, so she had hundreds of them at his funeral.

I picked out my own flowers for Susie. Mom said that it would help me to remember her. When I'm older I'm sure I'll figure out what she meant by that. They were pale purple (lavender, my mom said). I'm not a botanist so I don't know what they were, I just remember them as smelling good and being pretty. I acted like such a "big boy" when I placed them in the casket. (No one knew that soon after I locked myself in the bathroom and cried until I was sick. I was eight, for goodness sake.) Aunt Gretchen wanted to put them *on* the casket, but I wouldn't let her. I wanted Susie to have them and I knew that if I placed them in her hands, she would.

I noticed a few years ago that my neighbor Mr. Simon let his dog inside on the days of a funeral. I guess this was his own way of paying his respects. Luke Sanders doesn't work on his hot-rod, and Jessie Kellogg doesn't practice her dance routine in the front yard. Others do their thing; I do mine.

Like today for instance. I'm just sitting here watching people walk slowly into that dove gray building. Many are carrying handkerchiefs and all are dressed in solemn colors: dark browns and burgandies, blacks, steel grays, midnight blues. I even saw a woman earlier wearing a hat with a net veil on it. I thought they just wore those in the movies. I also saw Mr. Silas's granddaughter dressed in hunter green and white ruffles. She appeared to be about four. Almost as old as Susie on her last birthday.

That day was festive enough to make everyone dread what was to come. We all knew that Susie was going to leave us, but it was her fifth birthday and

she wanted clowns. So she got clowns; clowns on the cake, the balloons, the napkins, the table cloth—everything was clowns. Mom even hired a real one for the party. We all laughed, especially little Susie. For a few hours she was a happy, healthy little girl. But everyone knows that all good things must come to an end.

Looking out the window of my tree house I see that people are beginning to go to their cars. Mr. Silas's widow just lit up a cigarette. Mom said she had quit, but I guess after watching her husband suffer from cancer she deserved a little setback. My dad smoked, but he had to quit when Susie's cough started. We all thought she was allergic. But even that air purification thing in the hallway didn't help her.

There goes the hearse leading the rest of the pack. It kind of reminds me of the Pied Piper. We had to change the tale a little because Susie hated rats. So instead Mom used chipmunks. Judging from the cars, I'd say Mr. Silas was a well-liked man.

I can see Mr. Simon's dog in his living room window. He's running from one side to another. And from the looks of it, I'd say he's barking. Mr. Silas used to walk him for Mr. Simon when he went on vacation. I wonder if he's saying goodbye.

Susie used to think that he could talk. Every time we went into the backyard he'd bark. She'd always smile and say that he was saying hello. I wonder if she was right.



Illustrator: Jo Ann King



The Chase

Denise Cessna

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned;" that is what I have always been told. Whoever came up with this idea obviously had a run in with my great-aunt Ethel. My cousins and I were taught at a very young age that you never, *ever* try to spite Ethel Crasson. Our parents had learned this same lesson many years earlier and they tried instilling the same lesson in their children. Despite this, my cousin Elliott could never resist pushing the envelope. And somehow he always managed to drag me into the middle of everything.

On Thursdays, Aunt Ethel went to have her hair done at the beauty parlor. One such Thursday in early June, Elliott and I walked down the street to take her some muffins Elliott's mom had baked that morning. We were only seven and six, but our small Louisiana town was safe enough that people didn't even lock their doors. For the entire walk, Elliott found some excuse to dawdle. First, it was his neighbor's dog, Butch. Then, it was his friend Jeff's two cats, George I and George II. By the time we reached Aunt Ethel's house, we could see her big green Chevy Impala turning onto Main Street.

"Why don't we just leave 'em on the porch?" Elliott said as he yanked the basket of muffins from my hand.

"No!" I cried, snatching it back from him. "If we leave 'em on the porch, Butch or the two Georges might get 'em and then your moma'll whoop us both."

I decided that we should stay and wait for Aunt Ethel. After all, she didn't have much hair so how long could it take the lady at the beauty shop to fix it? We sat down on the front steps and waited. After about five seconds Elliott started fidgeting. "I'm bored," he grumbled under his breath.

"So am I," I shot back "but if you hadn't been foolin' around with that dumb dog and those crazy cats then we wouldn't have to wait."

About that time, George I and George II came sauntering into Aunt Ethel's yard. George I was a large, yellow tom cat with only one ear. George II was black with a small, white spot on his chest and a slightly smaller build than his companion. I watched them as George I staked out a spot underneath Aunt Ethel's Japanese Magnolia to watch for birds. George II took his stance a few feet away in the tulip bed. They looked like two little guerrilla soldiers waiting to ambush the enemy.

Elliott picked up a stick lying nearby and started digging in the dirt next to the front walk. I decided that I would walk to the side of the house and smell the hyacinths Aunt Ethel and I had planted last spring. Their fragrance filled the air. Just as I was about to lose myself in the sweet aroma, Elliott called out from the front of the house, "Hey, Sara come look what I done with the cats." I skipped around to the front of the house to find Elliott grinning from ear to ear. In one hand he held the stick he had been digging in the dirt with and in the other

he held both Georges' tails.

"What do you want, now? Why are you holding those cats' tails?" I asked, unsure of whether or not I wanted to know the answer.

Elliott was still grinning when he slipped his stick through the fingers on his other hand. At the same time, he released the two cats' tails he had been holding together and lifted the stick. As I stood there amazed, I realized that Elliott had taken his yo-yo string and tied the cats' tails together. Both Georges were hanging over the stick writhing and meowing in pain. "Put them down, Elliott, you're gonna' pull their tails off," I ordered in my most adult tone of voice. Elliott began to lower the stick slowly. Just then, George I took a swipe at him and scratched his arm.

"Ow!" screamed Elliott as he dropped the stick. The cats stumbled around in circles until they became coordinated enough to run under Aunt Ethel's house.

"Now look what you've done," I said. "We have to get them out of there before Aunt Ethel gets home."

"If you think I'm going under that house, you're crazy!" exclaimed Elliott. "You go get 'em, Sara, you're smaller."

Somehow, I knew that was coming. Elliott was always just a little bit afraid of dark places. I peered through the hole the cats went into and prepared to make my move. Just as I was halfway through the small opening I heard a noise behind me. "What was that, Elliott?"

"Aw, it ain't nothin' but Aunt Ethel's automatic sprinklers comin' on. Keep moving," he ordered.

Once I was all the way in, I let my eyes adjust to the low light and looked around for the two Georges. I spotted them in the corner to my right and moved cautiously toward them. Just as I got close enough, they ran to the other corner. I turned in the same direction and scratched my knee on a sharp object nearby. "Ow!" I exclaimed. "Stupid cats! Elliott, this ain't workin', they won't come to me." I continued on my way toward them, but they kept moving further away.

"Hang on a minute, Sara. I have an idea," Elliott said as he turned away from the opening.

After what seemed like forever, I managed to get the cats to come to me. I was crawling with the cats under one arm and I was almost at the opening when Butch came running through the entrance, barking. George I and George II started hissing and scratching in every direction. Butch was trying desperately to get at the two cats, and I was just hoping to get out from under the house. I dropped the cats who went running out of the opening; their tails still tied together. Butch took out after them. I scrambled from underneath the house and joined the pursuit. "Real smart, Elliott!" I screamed sarcastically. Elliott turned Aunt Ethel's wheelbarrow over, spilling the compost. He pushed it over the opening underneath the house to keep the cats from returning to their hiding place and joined the chase through the yard.

The cats headed to the hyacinth bed where they made a sharp U-turn

trying to lose Butch, but because they were still tied together, they weren't fast enough to out-manuever him. I tripped on a hoe that Butch had knocked down and fell face first into the aromatic bed of flowers. Elliott, however, continued the pursuit. Our entire menagerie headed for the tulip bed, crushing almost every flower in the process.

As they made their way around the house, I decided to maintain my position and wait for the cats to come back my way. I didn't have to wait long. I grabbed the cats just as Butch rounded the corner from the back of Aunt Ethel's house. Instead of stopping, the big, yellow dog just plowed right into me. I stumbled backward for a few feet and slipped right into the pile of soggy compost.

The cats once again flew out of my arms and took off running, but this time, the string that bound them together was wrapped around my wrist. "Help!" I screamed as Butch continued to bark furiously at the two Georges. Elliott came running around the corner, out of breath and soaking wet.

"What happened to you?" I asked.

"I ran into the sprinklers, dummy," Elliott snapped back. He grabbed Butch, and I managed to get the cats back into my arms. About that time, we heard Aunt Ethel pull into the driveway. We looked at each other in terror. Aunt Ethel loved her flower garden and we had just ruined it. Our mothers had warned us about making Aunt Ethel mad and this would definitely do the trick.

"What are we going to do?" I asked.

"Maybe she won't notice," Elliott said, grinning weakly.

We both took a deep breath and walked around the corner to the front of the house. There Aunt Ethel stood, her arms crossed in front of her. For the first time I saw what the front yard was like. The muffins we had brought were smooshed into the front walk and one of the hoses to the sprinklers had come loose. Many of the little flowers planted along the walkway were either trampled or uprooted. It was the biggest mess I had ever seen.

We must have been a sight as we looked up at Aunt Ethel with our sad, apologetic stares. Elliott was holding Butch by the collar trying desperately to keep him from running away. I had George I under one arm and George II under the other with their tails still tied in front of me. Elliott was dripping wet and the animals and I were muddy from head to toe. The look that began to appear on Aunt Ethel's face was a total surprise. Why, she was actually smiling. Before Elliott or I could open our mouths to apologize, a long, hearty laugh came out of the woman we had always been told never to make mad.

After Aunt Ethel had gone inside, Elliott looked at me and said, "You know what? Aunt Ethel ain't so bad after all."

I will always remember that summer. Aunt Ethel didn't come down on us with hellfire and brimstone, but she did make us come back and fix her yard.

Resurrecting Katie

Arie Wilson

Death and poverty are two of the most serious evils known in the mind of a child of eleven years. Death boggles the logic of one so young. As for poverty, most children simply can not conceive it. To them, death occurs when someone goes to heaven. Poverty is when mom simply will not allow you to have what you so desire.

Katie was two months shy of her eleventh birthday when she first experienced humiliation. It was the kind of embarrassment that sticks with an impressionable youth. It would be a very long time before the shame and hurt left Katie's innocent memory.

"Come on Katie. Hurry it up!" her mother began. "I want to get back from the grocery store before noon."

"Momma, how are we going?" Katie softly asked. "We don't have no car." She knew that her stepfather had already left for work in their only vehicle.

"Do now!" her mother, exclaimed with excitement.

"Really, how'd ya get it? Where did you get the money for a car?" Katie skeptically questioned.

"Oh, well somebody gave it to me," she painfully said.

"Who? Who gave you the car?" Katie innocently questioned.

"John Rixt."

"John Rixt? Oh, like Rixt Funeral Home?" Katie asked.

"Yes John Rixt of Rixt Funeral Home," her mother answered with little patience.

In the mind of a child, things never appear as they really are. Most children are able to see the brighter side of darkness. Somehow, they seem to assume the best of a possibly horrible situation.

"Really?" questioned Katie.

"Yeah, really . . . So you're okay with it?" she asked.

"Yeah. Why not?"

"I thought you might be a little embarrassed," she said as she knelt to her daughter's level.

"Embarrassed? Why would I be embarrassed? After all, Mr. Rixt drives such a nice Cadillac," Katie beamed as she popped out the front door of her worn, old, white house. Her mother's face fell as Katie bounced outside.

"Honey, honey wait!" her mother called.

It was too late. Katie had already arrived on the porch. Katie's youthful eyes searched for the Cadillac she had expected to find. The ravaged yard held no such vehicle. Instead of the presumed car of luxury sat an old, horrible, black hearse.

Katie's eyes dropped low upon the ground. Her mother would be horribly hurt by her thoughts. Frankly, Katie could not conceive having to actually pull up at the Piggly Wiggly in such a conglomeration of a car.

The long beat up monstrosity had paint chipped away from its edges. The back door, the door for loading bodies, was tied shut with an old piece of

string. Part of the back bumper was missing and the remaining bumper hung low. The tires appeared rusted around the rims. It was a horrible heap.

Katie stood eyes open and mouth wide. The repercussions of this could be devastating for a young girl. What if a classmate saw her? As the hearse pattered along toward Brookhaven, Katie sunk low. She knew this was the beginning of much embarrassment.

The hearse had a top speed of forty-five miles per hour. On a road that most drove on in excess of sixty, it was devastating. A long line of cars backed up for miles behind the hearse. Suddenly it began to look like a poverty stricken funeral precession. Oncoming traffic began pulling over to the shoulder of the road. They were paying their last respects to the undead.

Finally, twelve miles and thirty minutes later, they arrived at the grocery store. The unwanted funeral precession had finally cleared. Now all that was left was parking the killer beast. Somehow, call it a premonition, Katie knew parking would have its pitfalls.

Ironically, she was correct. Her mother tried desperately to park the hearse. She tried every conceivable way possible. Her efforts were to no avail. Finally, in a fit of desperation, her mother gently rolled the hearse into a handicapped space.

Soon, what seemed to be a lifetime later, they marched in the grocery store. Her mother appeared proud as she walked through the automatic doors. Katie viewed her mother as the eternal pallbearer.

They began walking down each aisle. Katie cautiously watched those around her. She prayed no one had witnessed the parking fiasco.

The buggy was soon piled high with groceries. Katie would not allow herself to ask for anything special. Maybe, if money were plentiful enough, her mother would offer to buy her something. However, this moment never arrived.

They slowly approached the cashier. Her mom reached into her purse and retrieved a thin wallet. As the checker rang up the items, her mom counted the bills. There were very few to count. The cashier finished and produced a total of \$37.25. Her mother lay out a total of \$36.55.

"I'm sorry. I'll have to put something back," her mother said without shame.

Katie's face fell once more; this was only added humiliation.

"Momma, here," she volunteered pulling a wrinkled dollar bill from her pocket. "Go on, Momma, take it. It's all I've got."

Sadly, she took her daughter's only money. She handed it along with her \$36.55 to the patient cashier. The cashier punched in more numbers and produced change and a receipt.

Together they walked out of the crowded store toward their new car. Katie walked with her head high and shameless. Her mom pushed the cart toward the hearse and untied the string that held together the back door. As quickly as possible, they loaded the groceries. The stares proved to be minimal. The hurt was hidden. That day Katie became a new person. That day she was her own being.

The hearse pattered off in a smoking, moving, heap. Katie and her mother were riding off to their own personal cemetery, both awaiting their day of resurrection.

O N E

A C T

P L A Y S

How Walker Learned to Say I Love You

By Arie Wilson

Characters:

Walker Simmons A high school graduate, confused and searching for the path to follow
Cassie Young Lifelong friend of Walker and a college freshman
Jamie Johns Cassie's roommate and friend from high school

Setting:

The stage is divided in half by a single wall. On the right, two girls lie on their beds. One holds a cordless telephone to her ear. On the left a male in a living room.

The room is cluttered with mess. Dishes are thrown everywhere and clothes line the floor. A telephone can be heard ringing. The boy searches through the mess until he finds it.

Walker: Hello.

Cassie: Hey! How are you?
(Her voice is shaky.)

Walker: Fine. I'm doing good. . . Cass, is that you?

Cassie: Yeah, it's me.

Walker: How have you been?

Cassie: Good. Really good. I was just thinking about you.

Walker: Where are you? I called once and your mom said you'd moved off to school.

Cassie: I'm at school now. I'm going to T.W. How 'bout you? Are you still working at Timberhalls?

Walker: No, I quit so I could start school in December. I think I'm going to go to North Eastern. It'd be cheaper than coming to Tilden-Wayten with you.

Cassie: Really? I know you hated high school. I just didn't figure college would suit you very well. But then again, it's nothing like high school. I really like it.

Walker: That's what your mom said. She said you were happy. But do you really like it? Are you truly happy being away from home?

Cassie: Yeah, I like it a lot. Truthfully, I miss everyone. I miss Momma and Daddy and Lela and Bendi. I miss you.
(She pauses as if she regretted her words.)

Remember when we'd stay up all night and talk. I guess I've told you things I have never told anyone else. Remember that night we stayed up and watched that horrible HBO special on prostitutes. It was so vulgar. That's what I miss. I miss us.

Walker: Don't get all emotional on me. You know how I am. You know I can't stand hearing things like that.

(There is a moment of uncomfortable silence.)

Cassie: Yes, I know how you are. You're completely unattached and unemotional. You won't allow yourself to become attached or love anyone. You're completely selfish. You're afraid to get close. Yes, Walker Simmons, I know exactly how you are and always will be.

Walker: Oh, get off it Cassie. You know those things and how I feel without having to be told them. You can be as mushy as you want and you can give me a line of junk about love and getting hurt. I'm not the selfish one for not expressing my emotions. You're the selfish one for always needing to hear them.

Cassie: Walker, that's not fair.

Walker: You're the one not being fair.

Cassie: I didn't call you to fight. I called to see how you were. I think I should hang up before we say words we'll regret.

(There is a long pause.)

Good night, Walker. I just want you to know that what I'm about to say doesn't require a reply. . . I love you.
(Cassie hangs up the telephone abruptly and Walker exits the stage.)

Jamie: Are you okay?

(Cassie places the phone on its hook by Jamie and returns to her own bed.)

Cassie: I'm fine. It's just Walker. I don't think he'll ever be able to express his emotions. He'll never learn how to say 'I love you.'

Jamie: You know that's something that can't be taught.

Cassie: Specially when he doesn't want to learn.

(The telephone rings and Jamie puts the receiver to her ear.)

Jamie: Love is something that's realized. I mean one day you'll be sitting there doing nothing, feeling lost, and then... Bang! It just hits you. It knocks you to your knees. But that's the kind of special love only two people who are meant for each other can have. The love that families have and deep friendships entail is different. But still it's realized. Kind of like not knowing what you have until you think you might lose it. So I guess you could say love is a lesson learned. You learn not to take for granted what you have because you never know when it might

be taken away.

Cassie: When did you get so smart?

Jamie: I've always been this smart, you've just never realized until now.

Cassie: Oh, is that it?

Jamie: Yeah, that's it. Well, do you think Walker will call back?

Cassie: If he loves me he will.

Jamie: And what if he doesn't?

Cassie: I think I know he does. I just would like to hear it.

(They sit for a few short moments in silence.)

Jamie: What makes him that way?

Cassie: What way?

Jamie: You know, not able to say what he means. I wonder why he is like that?

Cassie: I think I know.

Jamie: Then enlighten me.

Cassie: I think it all goes back to how he was raised. His father was a marine and both his big brothers were in the military. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure they love each other. There never was a lot of open affection between the men in their family. I've never seen him get more than a handshake from his father before, much less a hug. They're just so different from my family. We were raised to love each other and show it. Maybe that's the difference between Walker and me. Maybe all my life I was taught to love openly.

Jamie: Makes sense. Walker's a nice enough guy, just that he has a hard time showing how he feels.

Cassie: Yeah. I think that's it.

Jamie: Do you think that he's going to call back?

Cassie: I really hope he does.

(After several long minutes of quiet, Cassie turns on the television.)

Oh, great!

(She sighs as the song "What's Love Got to Do With It" blares from the television.)

Jamie: Please turn it off.

Cassie: Maybe it was a sign.

Jamie: A sign?.

Cassie: You know, like some supernatural force saying, "Hey Cass, you loser, get over it."

(As she speaks, Walker returns and begins dialing the phone.)

Jamie: It was just a song don't read more into it...

(The phone rings interrupting her.)

Hello.

Walker: May I speak to Cassie.

Jamie: Just one second, Walker, I'll get her for you.
(Jamie tossed Cassie the telephone and then exits the stage.)

Cassie: Yes.

Walker: Cassie, I have some things to tell you.

Cassie: I'm listening.

Walker: I'm going to ask Allison to marry me.

Cassie: *(Pauses in a shocked manor then responds coolly.)*
 What's wrong? Is she pregnant?

Walker: No. Don't be sarcastic.

Cassie: I'm not being sarcastic. It's just that I don't think you should marry someone you don't love.

Walker: Who said I didn't.

Cassie: Walker, if you can't say the word how can you possibly know what it means?

Walker: Goodnight. Cassie, I just want you to know what I'm about to say doesn't require a reply. I love you, too.
(Walker hangs up the phone and turns off the living room light and exits the stage as Jamie enters from the opposite side of the stage.)

Jamie: What's wrong? You're so pale.

Cassie: Walker learned to say 'I love you.'

Jamie: Then what's wrong? Isn't that what you wanted?

Cassie: He's going to marry Allison.

Jamie: Isn't that good.

Cassie: It's wonderful.

Jamie: Then what is wrong?

Cassie: He finally said 'I love you.' I just wish he had three years ago.

Jamie: Are you going to be alright?

Cassie: I'm going to be fine.

Jamie: Then why are you crying?

Cassie: *(She is silent and ignores the question then speaks.)*
 Isn't it strange? . . . Isn't it odd how Walker learned to say I love you? I mean all this time he knew about it. He knew what it meant, but he never said it.
(Cassie turns her face toward the wall and Jamie rises and cuts off the dorm room light as the curtain falls.)





Sunday Sermons

(A Play in One Act)

Misti Thornhill and Denise Cessna

Setting: Three different churches in the same town.

Cast of characters:

Narrator

Church 1 Characters: Preacher 1, Old woman

Church 2 Characters: Preacher 2, Young woman

Church 3 Characters: Preacher 3, Song Director, Teenage girl

The stage is divided into three sections. Each section represents a different Christian church. As each female character begins to speak, the lights dim on her church, and the female character is spotlighted. During the female character's monologue, her preacher continues to pantomime his speech. The characters in the two other churches remain still until time for their scenes.

Narrator: It is Sunday morning and many have scrambled out of bed and dressed in their best clothes to take part in a weekly ritual. They are going to church, but what do they really think about the things that they hear?

Scene I

(Lights come up on the Church 1 characters.)

Preacher 1: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's another fine morning, isn't it? Let me hear an Amen!

Old woman: Oh no! It's going to be one of those sermons. He'll probably go on for more than an hour about hell and damnation. Just one Sunday I would like to come to church and hear about those wonderful miracles of Jesus without that darn preacher beating on his Bible. Lord knows I'm old enough and my heart is far too fragile to take many more Sundays of this. I enjoy coming to church, but sometimes this gets ridiculous.

Preacher 1: God loves all of you this morning, Amen! He wants all of you to know that he's prepared a wonderful place for you and the only way to reach it is to REPENT, Amen!

Old woman: Look Mister, my daughter-in-law is at my house cooking on my stove with my dishes. I don't have time to go through a long drawn out description of how horrible our eternity will be without our blessed Lord. I pray every Saturday night that you will just keep it simple and hit the highlights of salvation. I wonder if that scatter-brained wife of my son even knows how to operate a

stove. She'd better not blow up my house!

Preacher 1: I know that in the past I've been a little longwinded on the subject of salvation. This morning, however, I'm going to keep it short and sweet.

Old woman: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Now I can get home in time to save my house from that crazy woman! I wish Sister Bertha would keep those grandchildren of hers still. They run around like wild heathens. We come here to worship God, not to play "Cowboys and Indians". Her youngest grandchild just wails and wails and she doesn't even take the poor thing to the nursery to calm him down.

Preacher 1: If you wish to receive salvation, you must come to the altar and confess all before God! If not, you are doomed to eternal damnation!

Old woman: Oh well, I only *thought* we were going to get out of here early. Maybe if I just sit here and stare at his bald spot, he'll hurry up the sermon. If not, there's always next Sunday. Wait a minute, I think there's something in my dentures.

(Lights fade on Church 1 just as the old lady removes her dentures.)

Narrator: I hope that grandma's house is still there and that her prayer is answered next Sunday. In the meantime, let's look in on the church down the street.

Scene II

(Lights come up on Church 2.)

Preacher 2: Let me warn you, young people. Listening to this ungodly music will make you susceptible to evil. There is nothing good in it. For every positive message there may be, there are ten negative ones.

Young woman: Here we go again, another holier-than-thou, close-minded preacher telling us that we should stereotype all music other than gospel evil. I know numerous songs that have positively changed my life and I didn't find them all on the "gospel" station necessarily. I don't like it when someone treats me like a moron by implying that I can't discern good and evil and choose the right way. How would he know what else is on the radio anyway, unless he listens himself on occasion. What a hypocrite! God, knowing that I would make plenty of mistakes in my feeble attempt at life, still gave me free will.

Preacher 2: So why even risk falling into sin. If you listen only to Christian music, you won't be tempted.

Young woman: Yeah man, just put our blinders on and live in church or tuned into the Christian station our entire lives. It just doesn't work that way. Life is made up of different styles and experiences. If we only know of one possible choice, how do we measure ourselves against anything? I'm sorry, but I refuse to be close-minded, and I don't believe God intends me to be. AMEN!

(Young woman tunes out the preacher and turns to face the audience as the lights fade on Church 2.)

Narrator: Boy, that was short! Perhaps we'll find something else across town.

Scene III

(Lights come up on Church 3.)

Song Director: Thank you, Sister Betty, for that lovely offertory hymn. Your music always blesses the soul.

Teenage girl: I wonder if she knows she has a run in her pantyhose and her slip is showing. Sister Betty is sweet, but she's a little absent-minded. Hey, they got new carpet for the sanctuary! They could have picked a different color. That beige is a little too dingy looking.

Song Director: Now it is my pleasure to introduce our visiting pastor, Brother Terry Jordan. Brother Jordan comes to us from Monroe.

(Song Director moves off stage as Preacher 3 moves to podium.)

Teenage girl: He's a pastor? He's only twenty-one. You know, if I weren't seeing someone, I'd definitely have to hit on him. Oh God! I'm so sorry. Please don't strike me dead, after all, I'm only human. I've got to think about something else.

Preacher 3: Our sermon today is about pride and the things that pride will never do.

Teenage girl: What? What is he talking about? Pride is a feeling not a tangible item that can do anything. I hope for his sake that he ties this together well because these people are a tough crowd to preach to. Hey! Someone repainted the choir loft. What is with this color scheme? This is a house of the Lord, not an experimental palette for a depressed decorator.

Preacher 3: The first thing that pride will never do is to admit he's wrong.

Teenage girl: You got that right! My boyfriend never admits when he's wrong, which is most of the time. I, on the other hand, don't have to admit that I'm wrong because I never am. That's not Sister Betty's slip, it's just part of her dress.

Preacher 3: The second thing that pride will never do is to say he's sorry.
Teenage girl: Maybe I should apologize to my sister for taking her sweater without asking. Has it been that long since I've been to this church? I was positive that the baptistery was a bright green, not eggshell white. What in the world are they doing to this place? The only ounce of color in this room is the colored bands on the microphones. Oh, no! Brother Billy's asleep again. Ow! That must have hurt! It's a wonder that poor old man has any ribs left the way Sister Betty elbows him every Sunday.

Preacher 3: The third thing that pride will never do is to ask for forgiveness.

Teenage girl: What did he say? That's it, I'm going straight to hell. I've been sitting here this whole time and I've not paid attention to a word this incredibly good looking preacher is saying. I'm going to burn for all of eternity. I'm never going to get wings or a halo and I'm not going to get to sing with an angelic voice. All I'll be able to do is scream and rant and rave like a lunatic in an asylum. My boyfriend and my sister will look down on me from heaven, point and laugh at me. They'll taunt me with their tall glasses of ice water and I'll only be able to sit there and suffer. I'm so sorry Lord. I was wrong for thinking and doing those things. Please forgive me. I wonder if that preacher is married?

(Light fades on Church 3.)

Narrator: As the morning creeps into afternoon and as the services end, the families file out of church.

(Lights come up on all three churches. Female characters walk up and shake hands with their respective preachers.)

The children will start stripping off their church clothes as soon as they see the light of day. All will go home and wait for the day to end and a new week to begin.

(All lights fade.)



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Illustrator: Justin Moak



